



ROLE OF AHARA AND VIHARA TOWARDS THE HEALTH MAINTENANCE AND PREVENTION OF DISEASES: AN AYURVEDA REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ahara is described as supporting pillar of life; which gain prime importance since *Vedic* period of time. *Ahara* is responsible for growth and longevity; it enhances *Ojas*, boosts immune system and helps to govern physiological activities of body. Some pathological conditions are associated with the consumption of wholesome and unwholesome diets, these diseases includes obesity, hypertension, diabetes and cancer, etc. Therefore Ayurveda advocates balanced diet for the prevention of such types of diseases. Ayurvedic philosopher described concepts of *Annapana Vidhi*, *Pathyapathya*, *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatan* and *Dvadasha Asana Vidhi* for taking meal in appropriate ways. Similarly daily routine (*Vihara*) plays pivotal role for the maintenance of normal physiology of human body and prevention of diseases. The conduction or obeying the rules of *Sadvrutta*, *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya* and *Ratricharya* offers physiological and psychological benefits. These approaches of daily routine also prevent diseases associated with life style factors. Present article summarizes role of *Ahara* and *Vihara* towards the health maintenance and prevention of diseases.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda*, *Ahara*, *Vihara*, *Sadvrutta*, *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Disease*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda as science of life provides several ways to remain healthy and prevent lifestyle disorders. As ancient health care system of world Ayurveda not only suggest ways of disease prevention but also provides ways of living. Poor diet, lack of exercise, poor sleeping pattern, stress and sedentary life style, etc. are considered main causes of lifestyle disorders. Amongst these factors *Ahara* is one of the major issues that can alter human health significantly. *Ahara Dravyas* can be categorizes as *Dravyabhuta Aushadhi*. Therefore it can be used as *Upaya* or *Adravyabhuta Aushadhi* for the *Vikaraprasamana*.^[1-4]

As similar to *Ahara*, the *Vihara* (daily and seasonal routine) affects physiological and psychological potential of human being. Disciplinary routine (*Vihara*) helps to prevent various diseases. *Sadvruttapalana*, *Dinacharya*, *Ratricharya* and *Ritucharya* are the major discipline recommended by Ayurveda philosophers which are to be adopted for maintaining normal health status. Healthy social relationships, spiritual growth and moral conducts offer advantages in stress management.^[4-6]

Role of *ahara* in health management

Ahara is described as the important factor for the sustenance of life. It is one of the pillars of life amongst the three *Trayopstambha* viz. *Ahara*, *Nidra* and *Bhramcharya*. The quality and quantity of *Ahara*, eating habits and other factors related to the diet affects health of individual greatly. *Ahara Vidhi Vishesh Ayatanani* includes dietary factors which are responsible for health and diseases. *Ahara* is described as *Mahabhaishajya* (medicine) that support and promote health, but faulty dietary habits may impart adverse effects which results various life style disorders. These types of diseases can be prevented by proper *Ahara* and adaptation of good eating habits.

Ahara should be selected as per the *Prakriti* or constitution of person; *Ahara* is considered as *Brahman* since it preserves supreme importance in the life of human being. *Rasas* present in *Ahara* provides complexion, *Ojas* and strength while *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible diet) causes adverse effects. *Acharya Charaka* described *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatan* which includes eight discipline of eating while *Acharya Sushruta* mentioned *Dvadasha Asana Vidhi* which

includes twelve discipline of eating. These rules contributed greatly towards the promotion of health and long life. Wholesome dietary regimen helps one to remain away from the diseases. Moreover diseased person can be cured by using medicines along with disciplinary dietary conducts. *Ahara rasa* formed from ingested diet, this *Rasa* nourishes body, mind and sensory organs.^[3-5] Ayurveda describes some qualities of *Ahara* as depicted in **Figure 1**.



Figure 1: Properties of ahara.

According to Ayurveda *Ahara* should be similar to *Panchmahabhutas* composition and must possess *Akashiya*, *Agneya*, *Vayavya*, *Apya* and *Parthiva* attributes. *Ahara* provides nourishment to *Dhatus*, support growth and development of body and enhances *Ojas* if consumed in appropriate proportions according to the internal constitution of body.

Hitakara Ahara helps to maintain longevity, good health, intellect and voice. Food combination, cooking methods, quantity of food and time of meal also play important role towards the beneficial effects of *Ahara*. The season and place of food intake also considered important. *Ahitakar Ahara* (unwholesome food) may impart harmful effects thus need to be avoided. Similarly inappropriate time, wrong combination of food, inadequate quantities and inappropriate cooking methods can create adverse health effects instead of beneficial effects of consumed foods.

Proper *Ahara* provides happiness, *Brahmacharya* and *Nidra* thus helps to attain aim of *Trayaupastambhah* as mentioned in Ayurveda. *Ahara* is considered as most important factor of life since health as well as diseases merely depends upon the *Ahara*. Proper diet consumed in appropriate manner gives positive health and avoid pathogenesis of diseases. Faulty diet can disturbs functions of body thus *Ahara* is described as causative factors of diseases. Therefore Ayurveda suggested concept of *Pathya* and *Apathya Ahara* which includes diet that should be consumed and avoided in particular pathological conditions.

Awful eating habits, wrong cooking methods, irregular timing of meal and wrong combinations of food materials can lead various health problems. *Ahara* gives immunity and resistance against many pathological conditions thus prevents prevalence of common conditions associated with awful dietary habits.

Ahara is necessary for *Varna*, *Bala* and *Upachaya*, etc. According to the ancient philosopher of Ayurveda *Ahara dravya* is considered as *Aushadhi* that acts as medicine itself and provides strength against diseases. The correct way of eating also enhances effects of some medicines in case of treatment of diseases thus person get relieved from diseases by following good dietary habits along with medicines.^[4-7]

Role of ahara in health management

Vihara means way of living which includes social behavior, moral conducts, daily routine seasonal regimen and overall pattern of lifestyle. *Acharya Charaka* states that inappropriate conduct of life (*Apathya Vihara*) can enhances susceptibility towards the diseases while *Pathya Vihara* brings harmony of life and prevents diseases. Ayurveda advocated following conducts as suggestive *Vihara* (daily regimen) for acquiring good health:

- ❖ Avoid *Vega Dharana*
- ❖ *Ritu Anusara Shodhana*
- ❖ Adopting the principles of *Dincharya* and *Ratricharya*
- ❖ Good moral, spiritual and behavior conduct
- ❖ *Satvavajaya*, *Rasayana Sevana* and *Pathya Vihara* according to the diseases.

Vihara is also concerned about the social relationships, spiritual growth and stress management. Restful sleep (*Nidra*), avoidance of late night awakening and morning exercise (*Yoga*), etc. are recommended to remain healthy and free from diseases. Ayurveda suggested routine that helps to establish harmony with nature. The conducts of disciplinary regimens prevents physical as well as mental ailments like depression and anxiety, etc.

According to Ayurveda one should wake up early in the morning, before sunrise followed by detoxification of body to eliminate waste from the body. Cleaning of mouth, teeth and eyes are advises to maintain general hygiene. Exercise or *Yoga* in the morning is considered good to strengthen muscles and keeping away lethargies. Massage delay aging and light but healthy breakfast according to the *Ahara Vidhi Vidhana* provides energy and nourishment.

The conducts of suggestive daily regimen provides many benefits including *Ayusholabha*, *Balalabha*, *Suprasannendriyata* and *Soumanasyata*, etc. The *Pathya Vihara* helps to acquire peaceful mental status longevity thus prevent psychological ailments. Ayurveda suggests specific daily routine based on the individual's body constitution. One should follow lifestyle according to the

Dosha & Prakruti. Conduction of rules of *Dincharya* not only prevents disease, but also prolongs life and promotes good health. Ayurveda give prime importance to the various time intervals of day and night which are correspondence to the three *Doshas*. Therefore one should follow specific daily and dietary routine according to the predominance *Dosha* and correspondence time duration. According the Ayurveda conduction of rules of disciplinary regimen imparts health benefits in overall dimensions and decreases susceptibility towards the diseases.^[7-10]

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda emphases preventive approaches rather than management and the major health related aspects of Ayurveda comes under the concept of *Ahara* and *Vihara*. The conduction of suggestive dietary and daily regimen produces excellent results towards the prevention of diseases and also supports methods of disease treatment while applying with medications. The Ayurveda approaches of *Pathya Ahara* and *Vihara* imparts health benefits in all manners and helps individual to remain away from the pathological conditions.

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